

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



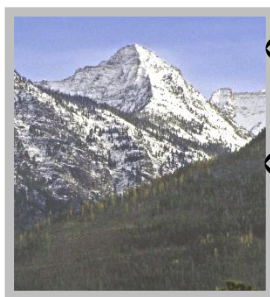
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: **6:00 AM, Friday, February 10, 2012**
Valid Until: **Midnight, Friday, February 10, 2012**
Next Update: **Tuesday, February 14, 2012**
Issued by: **Stan Bones**

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



Avalanche Danger Summary

2 - Moderate : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation on steep, open terrain

1 - Low : below 5,000

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural avalanche unlikely Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small avalanches in specific areas or Larger avalanches in isolated areas Concern is steep, open slopes and gullies lacking vegetative and terrain anchors, particularly slopes with relatively thin snow cover overlying exposed rock Concern also with unstable near surface snow associated with buried surface hoar

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - below 5,000 ft. elevation

Danger Level	1 - LOW
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally safe avalanche conditions exist Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both natural and human triggered avalanche unlikely
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very small avalanches in widespread areas or Small avalanche in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday into Wednesday ---High pressure produced a widespread stagnant air mass over the region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mostly clear skies over the mtns ◦ Clouds and fog choked the valleys • Wednesday & Thursday ---A weak storm system passed over the area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mild temperatures ◦ Light new snowfall
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday into Wednesday ---Dry • Wednesday & Thursday---Light new snowfall over most of the region's mtns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 0.2 – 0.3-inches of snow water equivalent at most mtn locations ◦ Slightly heavier at 0.4 – 0.6-inches SWE, N Swan and S Mission Ranges
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday into Wednesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Mountain daytime temps near, to slightly above freezing ◦ Nighttime temps under clear skies dropping into the teens or single digits F • Wednesday & Thursday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Both day and night temps stabilized in the high 20's° F to near freezing
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winds have generally been absent, light at best

Field Observation Locations

Thursday, 2-9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Trees Point, East Cabinet Range, east of Trout Creek on the Kootenai • Krause Basin area, North Swan Range, NE of Bigfork on the Flathead • Doris Creek - Jenny Lake area, North Swan Range, S of Hungry Horse
Tuesday, 2-7-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowsheds 11 & 10.7 area of John Stevens Canyon, S'ern edge of Glacier Park, Hwy 2, west of Marias Pass

Observer Report Locations

	None received
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<u>Avalanches Observed</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday, 2-7-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Bayhorse Pass, East Cabinet Range, 30 air miles S of Libby Small soft slab, natural release ◦ Head of Sheep Creek area, Middle Fork Corridor, S of Essex Sizeable natural slab avalanche in surface new snow layer ◦ Numerous small wet loose slides and roller/sun balls on south aspects during the recent clearing
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Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★ Less★★ Least ★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-4-inches of new snow depth received Wednesday night and early Thursday across most of the region's mtns New snow deposited upon weak surface hoar layer developed during cold clear nights this past week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ This weak layer is of high interest currently, but not of significant concern because of its position, very close to the surface and with minimal loading atop 		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent winds have generally been calm to light with wind transport minimal Be alert if winds do increase, for wind slabs forming upon the weak surface hoar layer currently shallowly buried 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak layers of faceted, angular, graupel, or other weakly bonded grains continue to be found between ¼ and ½ way down in the snowpack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These continue to fail in shear tests Concern remains with basal depth hoar found beneath shallow snowpacks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Found mainly along the East Front and near the Continental Divide 		
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable currently with reestablished cloud cover Can occur rapidly however with even short clearing following a new snowfall 		
Rain-on-Snow		Not applicable		
Loose Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild temperatures generally promoting surface snow consolidation 		
Other Concerns				

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cooler air mass is expected to push from the E Friday A frontal boundary is forecasted to develop along the Continental Divide
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday & Saturday, light to moderate new accumulations of snow are expected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2-3-inches of new depth each day in the Flathead mtns ○ Lesser amount of 1-2-inches new depth each day on the Kootenai
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daytime temps remaining mild in the high 20's to mid 30's ° F Nighttime lows 15-25 ° F throughout the period
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light and variable

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the weekend we expect the avalanche danger to remain near current levels
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be particularly alert to new snow loading either from precipitation or wind upon the existing buried weak surface hoar
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on